

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this patent application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments, and the following remarks. Claims 1-8 are in the application. Claim 1 has been amended to include the elements of claim 9, now canceled. The specification has been amended to correct a typing error. No new matter has been added.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-3 and 5-9 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over *Kiernan* in view of *Lundstedt*, and rejected claim 4 over these references and further in view of *Baker*. Applicant respectfully traverses.

Kiernan shows a buckle having a cutout covered by a separate speaker grill, which is set inside the opening (see col. 4, lines 10-12). By necessity, to accommodate this speaker grill, the top of the buckle has a large opening. The large size of this opening compromises the strength of the buckle, and is not aided by the separate grill piece that is set inside it.

Lundstedt suffers from the same drawbacks, due to the large size holes in the buckle. *Lundstedt* requires large openings, because the openings must align themselves with the openings in

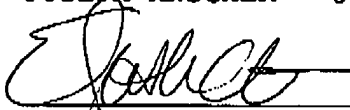
the male portion between the outer legs and the center prong (see, e.g., col. 2, line 63-col. 3, line 5).

Thus, both references provide for very large openings in the wall of the female buckle. This weakens the female walls, especially with respect to being crushed. In the present invention, the mesh is integrally molded with the buckle material and provides a much more reinforced structure. The openings are very small, leaving very little that is not reinforced. There is no need to align the holes in the present invention with any structure in the male portion, thus allowing the mesh area of the present invention to be used on a much larger scale along the female body surface, because even though the mesh area is large, the portions without a connecting wall structure are very small. The present design offers the opportunity to offer a very large area of decreased weight, without compromising buckle strength.

Nether Kiernan nor Lundstedt teaches or suggests a buckle having an integrally formed mesh along the female walls, and combining the two references would not lead to a buckle having an integrally formed mesh portion, because both Kiernan and Lundstedt have large openings in their female walls, a feature that the present invention purposefully avoids.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that claims 1-8 are patentable over the cited references, taken either singly or in combination. Early allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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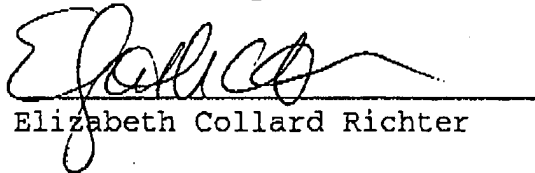
Enclosure: Copy of Petition for a One-Month Extension of Time

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being sent by facsimile-transmission to the Commissioner of Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on January 21, 2005.



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